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The Education Technologies That Educators Believe Can Have The Biggest Impact On Student Learning (Survey Results)

by K. Walsh on November 13, 2011



Survey results indicate several specific technologies as those that we should be investing in and focusing on if we want to effectively leverage technology in education.

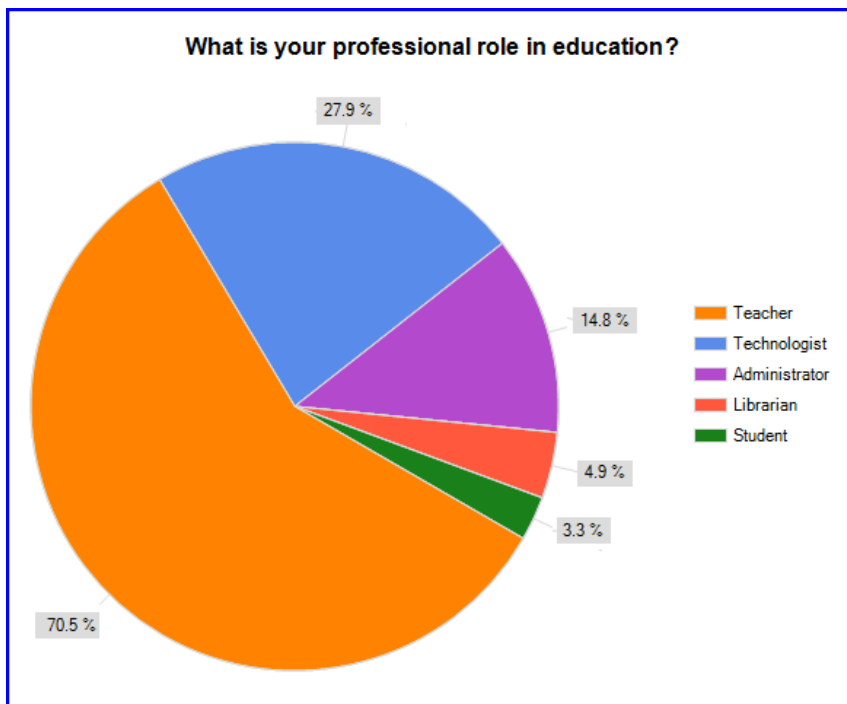
Tough economic times have more people questioning what we are getting out of technology spending in our schools. Unfortunately, results are often being sought in overly broad terms, like improved grades and graduation rates, without trying to more directly relate technology program goals to specific outcomes.

One thing that frequently seems to be either lacking or overlooked in many of the school technology programs we read about is input from those who are responsible for leveraging these technologies in instructional application. Are teachers integral to the planning, rollout, and accountability cycles for these programs? Are administrators seeking their input about which technologies can have the biggest impact on student learning before they start planning and budgeting for large scale technology expenditures?

Last month EmergingEdTech ran a survey seeking input on this subject from teachers and their colleagues. In this article we will review some of the findings from that survey.

Respondents Profiles – Who Participated?

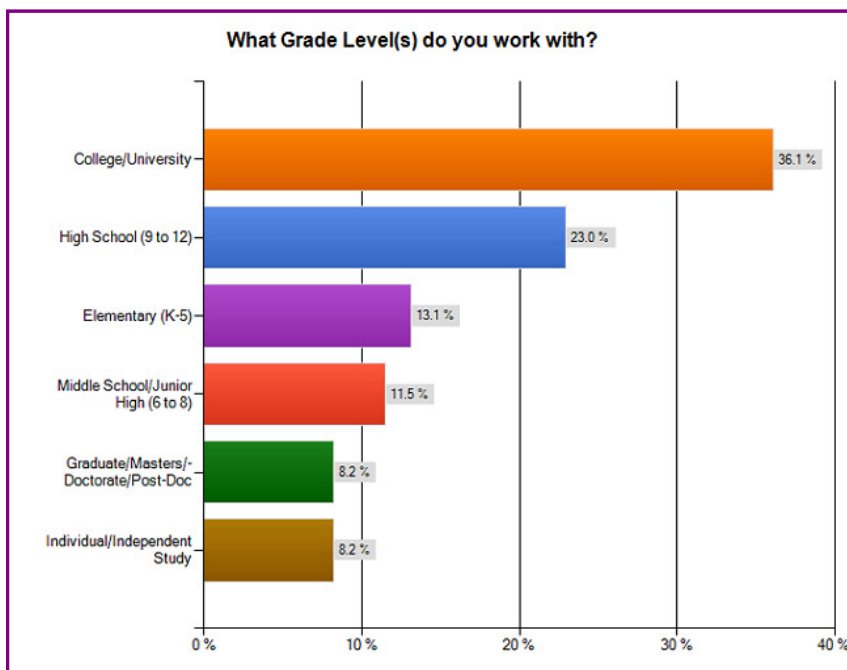
Before jumping into survey results, let's take a brief look at the profiles of survey respondents. First, a look at their roles (respondents were permitted to indicate more than one role). *Note that you can click on the picture to bring up a larger image.*



(Click the pic for a larger image)

A small number of respondents also indicated other or additional roles, such as “Instructional Specialist”, “Instructional Coach”, and “Faculty Developer”.

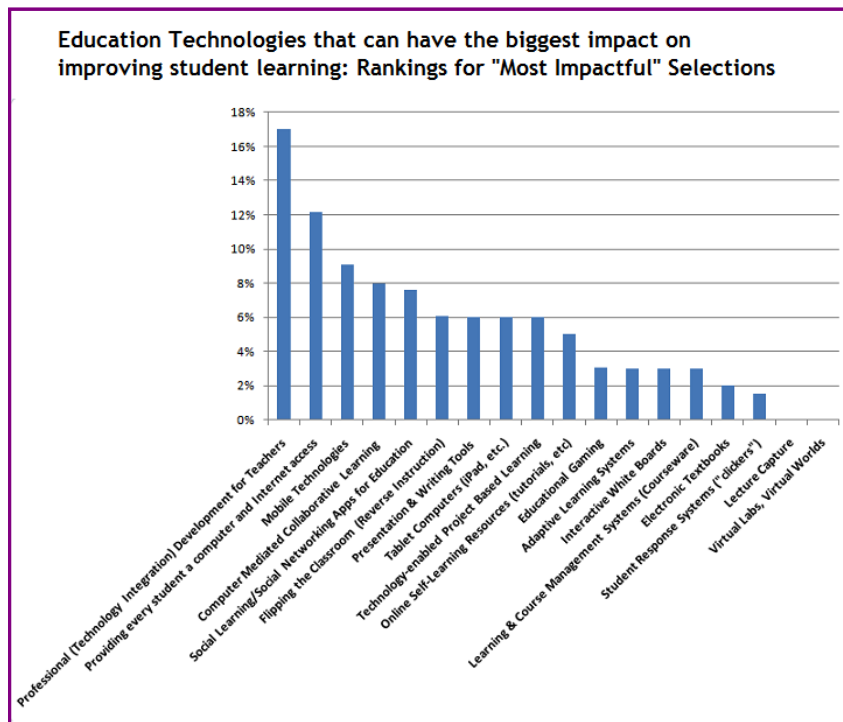
Next, a look at the grade levels being taught by survey respondents. Over 70% of the respondents teach in High School or Higher Education. Perhaps it can be safely assumed that the level of interest in the potential impact of technology is greater in later grades, as older students can and should be exposed to a wider spectrum of technologies than younger students, for a variety of reasons.



(Click the pic for a larger image)

Examining Survey Results

Now to jump into the main issue – which technologies were selected by respondents as those that can have the biggest impact on student learning, and why? This graph shows a ranked analysis of which technologies were selected as most impactful (*click on the image to bring up a larger view of the graph – one where you can read the text*).



(Please click the picture for a larger image)

The top three selections were:

1. Professional Development
2. Providing every student a computer and Internet access
3. Mobile Technologies

Professional Development received the most votes by a decent margin. This is so frequently cited by educators (*as in [these survey results](#) from earlier this year*), yet often seems to be overlooked or shortchanged in technology implementations in our schools. Educational institutions and school districts spend large sums on technology procurement, but often fail to allocate sufficient funds and resources to train educators on how to use the tools and how best to leverage them in the classroom.

The fact that “Providing every student a computer and Internet access” was the second most selected response is encouraging in that it seems to indicate that teachers are in support of the many programs in our schools that are providing laptops, notebooks, or tablet computers to all students. Perhaps these investments are well advised – now if only we could put together more thoughtful assessments of how these may be benefitting students.

Note that open ended responses were allowed, but only two were received – “Learning Analytics” and “21st Century Learning Skills”.

Educator's Comments

We asked respondents to indicate **why** they believe that the technology they selected can make the biggest impact on student learning, and they provided thoughtful feedback.

Professional Development

- “Teachers are the leaders in educational technology and its integration in the classroom. Until we can prepare them and get them to ‘buy in’ effectively, its impact will remain the same or lack progress.”
- “There are many ways to teach, many ways to learn, and many technologies (with more being added all the time). Teachers need training & on going development to know which technologies to use with which subjects/objectives ...”
- “Any one tech tool (ipad, google, etc.) is not as impactful as the acquisition of skills to utilize multiple technologies and to utilize technologies to collaborate with the world around you, near and far.”
- “Revamping how we teach is the only way learning is going to change.”
- “Our students can use technology. But our teachers need to educate our students in using the tools effectively ...”
- “Teachers still have the power to determine what actually happens in the classroom. Effective PD is the key.”

Providing Every Student A Computer & Internet Access

- “The computer connected to the Internet is a great equalizer for those students in poverty, rural communities, or those without a strong support system to encourage learning.”
- “Provides 24/7 learning opps”
- “Not all students have access to technology at home – schools need to provide that for their students.”
- “Duh” (*okay, not a particularly thoughtful comment, but slightly amusing, and on point!*)

Mobile Technologies

- “Because mobile technologies are being carried into the classroom anyway, and have the capability to support every other category in the list.”
- “Students use their smart phones for everything. Students should be able to search for classes, browse a course syllabus, and register all through their phone. Once class has started, the instructor would have the ability to send class announcements via their smart device.”
- “By grades 7 and 8, most of my students have a SmartPhone of some sort. Mobile tech offers great opportunity, and as the technology grows, it’s potential should expand exponentially.”

Continuing Our Analysis Of Survey Results

In [Wednesday's post](#), we'll further examine survey results, looking at the technologies selected as second and third most impactful and some of the feedback provided regarding those choices. We'll also look all the responses as a whole to see which technologies rise to the top when we combine votes for them across the three options provided (*as either most, 2nd, or 3rd most impactful*). Some of these results are particularly interesting, as technologies that did not get a lot of votes in the “most impactful” category prove to have more perceived potential than this initial analysis indicates.

A Note About The Number Of Survey Respondents

A key factor in the review of any set of survey results is knowing how many participants completed the survey. Response to survey was lower than hoped for – this site has been viewed by over 34,000 unique visitors in the 4 weeks since the post with the survey was published, yet only 66 educators completed the survey. Perhaps we should have offered an incentive, like a random give-away, but we wanted participants to answer genuinely and not just click through it half-heartedly in hopes of winning something. In any case, 66 educators spread across a spectrum of roles and grade levels provides a very useful and informative level of insight into the technologies that can matter the most.

What do you think about this? If you did not take the survey but still want to weigh in, please share your thoughts in a [comment](#)!

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K. Walsh [November 17, 2011 at 8:04 am](#)

Thanks Victor for taking the time to share your concern, and your ideas. I just wanted to take a moment to mention that I did not interpret the statement, “Not all students have access to technology at home – schools need to provide that for their students” to mean that we should provide tech to students at their homes – I thought the implication was that we should strive to provide tech for these students in school because they may not have access to it at home.



Victor [November 16, 2011 at 8:46 pm](#)

I agree with most of the points raised under the top three selections except for one. I am a huge technology enthusiast, but the comment about providing technology for every student at home is way off base. That is not the school’s responsibility, and I realize that not everyone can afford certain types of technology. However, suggesting that schools be responsible for providing technology at home is an idea that no school district could ever afford. Students bringing in handheld technology where the price tag is \$250 or less is a much better option considering many students will be bugging their parents for iPods and cheaper tablets as they become available. The devices can then be justified because they are now gaming and music systems as well as research tools that can also run great educational apps.



Jack West [November 15, 2011 at 12:07 am](#)

This is great information, K. Walsh. Thank you for using your stage to solicit and share it. I was a bit surprised by the number one choice, but my surprise is a good reminder that my perspective is one that is strongly influenced by my setting: the Silicon Valley. I was not surprised by number two, however. Much of the emerging interactivity tools rely on one to one device adoption. Few teachers are willing to integrate any practice that would marginalize even a single one of their students.



Tonya Moton [November 14, 2011 at 9:59 pm](#)

Smartphones are not allowed in high school where I teach at because of all the problems the students present with them. We must find a way to incorporate the smart phones appropriately but without proper minitoring

the phones are being used to cause a lot of problems more than the school can handle from cheating to making plans to jump someone in the back parking lot. I know this technology is so vital to our students but how do we get them to use it for the purposes your survey address? Facebook is another thing that has caused so many fights and we know it is a wonderful tool if used correctly. We must find a way to challenge our students focus.



[Ruben November 14, 2011 at 1:19 pm](#)

In Kalakai, we are working with an adaptative training system which is used to train and diagnose in-real-time reading comprehension skills.

Kalakai provides kids with personalized contents according their specifics needs.

Today, +17K children between 8-10 years old are training their skills in our educational & safe social network.

For further information, please visit <http://www.kalakai.net>.



[luis November 13, 2011 at 9:34 pm](#)

Many new technologies can be of impact to education.

Social networks such as facebook and YouTube as well as great resources including Wikipedia and Wolfram-Alpha are here to stay so that educators must use them in the teaching process. Many academics are posting great educational videos and materials online. The only problem is to sort the good ones from the rest and present them in an organized manner.

Online Self-learning is becoming fast the perfect choice of learning, especially with so many great educational videos available for free. The only problem is to sort the good ones from the rest and present them in an organized manner.

This effort is being done by: <http://Utubersity.com> which presents the best educational videos available on YouTube in an organized, easy to find way to watch and learn.

They are classified and tagged in a way that enables people to find these materials more easily and efficiently and not waste time browsing through pages of irrelevant search results.

The website also enhances the experience using other means such as recommending related videos, Wikipedia content and so on. There's also a Spanish version called <http://utubersidad.com>

This is a project that YouTube should embrace itself, with curated content from academics and maybe using a different URL (Youtubersity?) so it won't be blocked by schools.

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